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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 000305

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SUBJECT: JAPAN-DPRK: DIET STEPS UP INVOLVEMENT

REF: A. TOKYO 232
[1B.](#) TOKYO 165

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Classified By: CDA Joe Donovan per 1.4 (b/d)

Summary

[¶](#)1. (C) LDP faction leader and long-time North Korea watcher Taku Yamasaki believes that North Korean denuclearization must be achieved this year through the Six Party talks. Delisting the DPRK as a state sponsor of terror should also be effectively leveraged for the goal of denuclearization. Yamasaki and a non-partisan Diet delegation will meet next week with President-elect Lee Myung-bak to urge him to support President Bush's efforts and the goal of denuclearization this year. The Diet group will be led by senior LDP politician Koichi Kato, who assembled the opposition delegation members based on their willingness and qualifications to serve as a channel to the ruling coalition on Korean issues, including denuclearization and voting rights for ethnic Koreans resident in Japan. Yamasaki believes Lee Myung-bak is a realist who will care more about the abductions issue and take a harder line with Pyongyang.
End Summary.

"Denuclearization this year"

[¶](#)2. (C) Taku Yamasaki -- Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) faction leader, head of the party's Foreign Policy Advisory Committee and Chief Advisor to the Subcommittee on North Korea Issues -- told Embassy Tokyo on January 31 that denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula must be realized through the Six Party Talks during the Bush administration. With this mind, Japan should consider what role it can play in the process and how it can settle North Korean issues, including abductions, such that Japanese interests are not negatively impacted. Without settling the abductions and other issues, Japan will not be able to normalize relations with the DPRK, he said. In this spirit, the LDP Subcommittee on North Korea issues was created to discuss what role the LDP can play and how it can back the government (Ref A).

[¶](#)3. (C) Yamasaki's sense is that February will be key both to advancing the denuclearization agenda and seeking improvements in U.S.-DPRK and Japan-DPRK relations. To that end, coordination between the United States and Japan will be

critical, and Yamasaki expressed his hope that the removal of the DPRK from the state sponsors of terror list is effectively leveraged to ensure the ultimate goal of denuclearization.

Diet Group to Meet President-elect Lee

¶ 14. (C) A nonpartisan group of Diet members, including Yamasaki, plans to visit the ROK February 10-11 and will meet with President-elect Lee, Yamasaki said. Yamasaki intends to say to Lee that denuclearization "must be achieved during the next year." Although it is unknown how the next U.S. President will approach the DPRK, it is clear that President Bush is seeking denuclearization through the Six Party Talks, so now is the time to act. Yamasaki will ask President-elect Lee to support President Bush and note that PM Fukuda also supports President Bush in this regard.

¶ 15. (C) In a separate conversation on February 4, senior LDP Diet member Koichi Kato -- who will head the delegation to Seoul -- told Embassy Tokyo that the delegation will include members of the LDP, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), Komeito and Social Democratic Party. Kato said that he intentionally picked DPJ members who would be able to act as channels with the ruling coalition on matters related to the Korean Peninsula, including denuclearization and voting rights for ethnic Korean residents of Japan. After consulting with DPJ acting president Naoto Kan, Kato selected DPJ Diet members Yoshito Sengoku, Yukio Edano, Sakihito Ozawa, Ryuichi Doi and Ren Ho. Kato did not consult with DPJ Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama because he would have leaked it to the press; he also did not consult with Ichiro Ozawa because "he has no power within the party."

Yamasaki's Views of Lee Myung-bak

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¶ 16. (C) Although Yamasaki did not meet Special Envoy Lee Sang-deuk when he visited Tokyo last month (Ref B), he has met with both Cho Suk-rae, Chairman of the Federation of Korean Industries (and a relative of President-elect Lee), and Yoon Jin-sik, former Commerce Minister and a member of Lee's transition team. Based on these and other conversations, Yamasaki's impression is that Lee is realistic, will be more positive about relations with Japan and will not play the history card. Lee will also likely be more interested in the Japanese abductions issue than Roh Moo-hyun. Similarly, because Lee's focus will probably be more on denuclearization than unification, he will take a harder line with Pyongyang, Yamasaki surmised.

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